

February 16, 2007

## Testimony to State Administration Committee in support of SB437

Members of the Committee.

I would like to voice my support for SB437 for a variety of reasons. Having served as a Deputy Sheriff for 26 years and as Gallatin County Sheriff for over 6 years I have lived in that world for a considerable amount of time.

From the time that I started in 1975 to now the job and responsibilities of the Sheriff have changed dramatically. No longer is the Sheriff able to take the job with little or no experience. The expectation that the Sheriff is well trained, experienced and professionally performs his/her job is the norm.

Liability for actions and/or inaction for the Sheriff is the standard that we all live with daily. The highly technical society that we live in expects that we are capable of all of the latest and greatest technology that the public sees on TV.

Requiring a "Basic Law Enforcement Certificate" is not asking too much of an individual who is interested in serving as a sheriff. Understanding and having some experience in dealing with "Probable Cause" and "Search and Seizure" as well as the basics of criminal law is not requiring too much.

Personnel issues, labor and wage issues, budgeting, managing a jail, managing major investigations and having a general understanding of what the Office of Sheriff entails all require a minimum of training and experience.

Regardless of the size of the County the Liability remains the same. The office of Sheriff has become a profession, which requires at a minimum an understanding of basic policing functions.

The issue of "Grandfathering" current serving Sheriff's is only fair. Allowing individuals who are interested in serving as Sheriff to attend basic school as a pre-service candidate is also fair and demonstrates that they are serious about the responsibilities of serving as Sheriff. Individuals who have experience from other states or agencies can challenge to obtain the certification, as is the case now.

Setting higher standards can never be seen as a negative. By setting the standard high people will rise to the standard.

This is a good piece of legislation that will benefit the people of Montana in a big way.

James R. Cashell, Sheriff  
Gallatin County, Montana